POSITION OF WOMEN

C. G. 562 The position of women in the Caucasus was in many respects subordinate to that of men: male children were preferred, descent was patrilineal, residence patrilocal, women were excluded from inheritance rights; in case the headwoman was unable to reconcile a quarrel among the female members of the family, the case was put before the headman; divorces were in general more easily obtained by men than by women, and in the case of adultery the husband had the right to kill or disfigure his wife. The Circassian code of behavior forbade women to sit down while men were standing, and the husband was addressed in terms of respect by his wife. In most areas the women led a life of hard work; besides doing the housework, they also assisted in the work in the field, though certain activities such as tending horses and in most cases ploughing were performed by men only. Among the Georgian mountaineers, women were regarded from a religious point of view as unclean, and were forbidden to enter the walled precincts of the sanctuaries; the Svan had sexual avoidance rules to ensure success in hunting expeditions; in Mingrelia a woman may not kill a chicken or animal she is going to prepare, as this would spoil the food.

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In spite of these restrictions on her actions and rights, the Caucasian woman enjoyed more privileges than her sisters in other parts of the Near East, and she was held in higher esteem than in most societies. In Eastern Georgia, where Persian influence has been strong, and in general in the political and cultural centers, the women led a comparatively sheltered life. But where the indigenous Caucasian culture is better preserved, farther from the centers and especially in the mountain areas, women enjoyed a large degree of freedom. Besides playing an important role in the life of the family, they also engaged in public activities, could have their say in community gatherings, take the witness stand and even be mediators in judicial proceedings. Perhaps more important than legal status is the chivalrous respect for women which is characteristic of the Caucasian. No Circassian, however enraged, would start a fight in the presence of a woman, and the intercession of a woman during a fight or drunken brawl among the Khevsur - by throwing her head-cloth (mandili) before the feet of the combatants - would immediately separate them. The same respect is apparent in the customs relating to adoption, in folklore, and, curiously, in the Georgian language, where when male and female are mentioned together, the female always takes the first place: ded-mama "mother and father" (deda

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"mother," mama "father"!), tsol-kmari "wife and husband," da-dzma "sister and brother," kal-vazhi "daughter and son."

C.O. 796 785 fasting, the favor that the wolves be deaf and voiceless, immova ble and weak, and that the sheep of the worshippers be the ghosts of the spirit and enjoy his mercy. (From the wording of the prayer we may conclude that in his capacity as ruler of the wolves, Tutyr is also thought to possess the power of keeping the wolves from the sheep.)

C.O. 796 The festival devoted to the guardian spirit of the family is usually celebrated at night. After a goat has been slaughtered at midnight, the member of the family walk to the barn where they pray to the spirit, thanking him for the blessings of the past year and imploring him to grant new blessings in the year to come. Then they drink the millet beverage and eat a dish of goat's liver wrapped in the intestines and roasted on the grill, keeping completely silent during the ceremony. Afterwards, the men return home and eat their festival meal.

C.O. 796 782 562 It is of special interest that the worship of the god of health, Kuni-Bara, is exclusively reserved for the women. After a sick person has recovered, the woman of the house and those of neighboring families go to a tree which is considered sacred. They take cheese cakes and a jug of milk along and a dried sturgeon (Käf), which had been hanging above the head of the sick person, with a silver coin fastened to the fish. The oldest of the women, followed by the others, puts the cheese cakes down under the tree, which she sprinkles with milk while

C. O. 796 782 562 while singing sacred songs. After this ceremony they sit down under the tree, eat the cheese cake and the fish and hang on a few perforated coins on the tree as a votive offering to Kuni-Bara. Any person daring to steal these coins, would be affected with the disease of the former patient.

C. O. 796 562 Another festival with which only women are concerned, is the "feast of the virgins," which is celebrated at the end of autumn in the house of some old woman. It is only superficially linked with the Christian religion, insofar as it is celebrated in honor of Mary (Mairäm), "the Mother of God." The girls bake cakes with different fillings in the house of the old woman. The oldest girls takes one and prays first to Mary and then to the guardian spirit of the house and to other spirits for a bridegroom and for protection against sickness and wicked women. Afterwards, each girl takes one of the cakes and looks at its filling. When the filling i.: cheese, it means that her husband will be a rich owner of cattle, when it is a corn filling, the girl is destined to marry a rich farmer, and so on.

C O 796 On New Year's eve, the last, or next to the last, Friday of December, the Ossets start celebrating the New Year. For the holiday the housewife prepares beverages, a large cake and a number of small cakes formed in the shapes of ploughs, harrows, wheels and other utensils which give expression to their hope for a good harvest. At the approach of dusk the whole family sits down around the

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595 (1) Custom permits *all* North Caucasians and their neighbours, whether Christian or Mohammedan, to marry more than one wife. The Tartars near the city of Derbend in the eighteenth century are the only exception, but even in this single case, it ist not certain whether they were monogamists *de jure* or only *de facto*.

[177] (2) Everywhere polygyny is *pre-Islamic*, even if previous to their conversion to Islamism the particular tribe happened to be Christian. We might rightly, therefore, inquire into the possible origin of polygyny in the Caucasus. Polygyny, if borrowed at all, was not borrowed as an *isolated* institution. On the contrary, it seems to be a North Caucasian possession, first of all, as old as the practice [594] of levirate (*infra*, pp. 71—75). Furthermore, it seems to be a North Caucasian [614] cultural possession as old as the economic, social, and religious structure of the North Caucasian family itself. Here we understand " family " in its broad sense, including the joint-family and sib. We cannot now describe this family structure in detail. Briefly, by " the economic, social, and religious structure of the family " we understand that the family in North Caucasia has been and in many places still is the *raison d'être* of the individual.[30a] Whatever the individual does or whatever is done to him or for him has only one aim, the perpetuation and [581] prosperity of the family. Now, in the mind of the North Caucasian, polygyny is an immense asset and at times absolutely indispensable for the economic, social, and religious life of the all-important and solely-important family.

593 *Economically* considered, the wife is extremely important. In the North 562 Caucasus it is the wife who does most of the work (*infra*, pp. 156—159). In fact, sometimes a rich Avar will marry a son to a poor girl or to a widow of a lower class, with whom he is forbidden all communication, in order to have an additional worker in the house.[31] Moreover, a wife is not only a *worker*; she 842 is the " *worker-producing* " organ of the family. Even though boys are preferred (*infra*, pp. 159 ff), girls prove to be good and valuable workers and bring in, at times, a large brideprice (*infra*, pp. 82—91). Now, the more wives there are in the household, the more " worker-producing " organs there are, and by that very fact, at least in the mind of the natives, the family becomes so much the more economically healthy and secure.

The *religious* structure of the family may have contributed just as much to [769] the rise of polygyny as did the economic form of life. The most sacred duty of the individual and of the individual family is, or at least has been, to perpetuate itself, and thus to perpetuate the cult of the ancestors. It is a fact throughout North Caucasus that only a *son* can perpetuate the family and prevent the greatest calamity imagineable, its extinction. But a wife is precisely the " *boy-producing* " organ. If this organ is lacking or fails to function the family is doomed. Today one of the main motives for taking a second wife is sterility.[32] Or again, a second wife will be acquired if the first gives birth only to girls.

[30a] According to ancient customary laws.

[31] L'vov, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

[32] Cf. K. Maćavariani, " Nĭkotoryja čerty iz žizni Abchazcev. Položenie ženŝčiny v Abchazii," SMOMPK, IV (1884), No. 2, p. 42. E. G. Pčelina, " Rodil'nye obyčai u osetin," SE, 1937, No. 4, p. 88.

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587 (4) We must disagree with Kovalevskij in his interpretation of the levirate as a vestige of former group marriage.[20] Without offering us any evidence, he takes up the theories of Morgan and Frazer and applies them to the Caucasus. Such an institution as "group marriage" exists nowhere in the world, and to imagine that it has ever existed is mere fancy. In an attempt to explain the origin of preferential mating in the Caucasus we should lay aside all guesswork [562] and study the culture before us. For example: the unbearably low position of the North Caucasian woman (*infra*, pp. 152—159) may have made her appear as inheritable chattel. After all, the family purchased her, paid a high price for her, and now she constitutes a part of the family property no less than do the horses, cows, and sheep. Moreover, as we have explained above (pp. 44 f), she is more than *ordinary* family property: she is the best family investment, for she is the "worker-producing" and especially the "boy-producing" organ on which depends the economic, religious, and social life of the family. This realization would only too naturally disincline the family to give her up after her husband's [581] death. As we shall see in the following chapter, mating is not a private affair; it is a strictly family affair, the prime purpose of marriage being the good of the family or sib. She, as it were, belongs more to the *family* that purchased her than to the individual member whose wife she is. Finally, if we consider the pre-Islamic, pre-Christian, and pre-Avestic religion of the mountaineers, we are almost forced to postulate such an institution as widow-inheritance. [775] The life beyond does not differ from the present, and consequently the departed will need his wife in the nether world just as much as in this life. (We shall have occasion to speak of posthumous marriages! Cf. *infra*, p. 85.) We shall even show that suttee was not unknown in North Caucasus (Cf. *infra*, [842] pp. 131 f). The wife therefore must remain in the family. Moreover, the deceased needs offspring, a large progeny, just as much after death as during life, for his happiness and honour in the other world depend upon the cult he receives from his descendents. The widow, therefore, must remain in the family and another member must "raise up seed for his brother" and "build up his brother's house." In other words, the levirate is not a survival of a *primitive* culture but rather an institution very intimately connected with the economic, social and religious life of a relatively highly developed culture such as that of pastoral peoples.

595 [842] As a confirmation of what we have just now said about the origin of Caucasian preferential mating, we wish to describe another institution, still found today in various parts of Caucasus, the so-called *snohačestvo*. A boy-child is married to an adult girl with whom the father may have sexual intercourse as freely as with his own wife. The father is considered as living in lawful concubinage with his son's wife and may do so until the child becomes of age. We wish to stress that this practice is a perfect parallel to widow inheritance. The father "must raise seed" for his son and "build up his house" till he is himself able to do so. The children born of this concubinage belong to the childhusband, sometimes half to him and half to the progenitor. This is

[20] Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, p. 181.

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so far as to give them the title of the "most beautiful women in the world." Whether they, or perhaps the Mingrelians or others, deserve this title does not concern us here. What does matter is the conviction of the Turks and Persians that Cherkess women are beautiful. It is said that the eunuchs of Persia used to lay down their lives for them, and today, it is a known fact, that the Turks are still willing to pay immense sums to have these singularly beautiful women in their harems. No wonder then, that bride-markets were not unusual in Circassia in the nineteenth century. And even today they are still operating, using of course the black-market technique. What we wish to emphasize is that the girl sold on the bride-market is not sold *against* her will. She is not sold as a slave, even though slave-traders are the middlemen of the actual purchasers. She is not sold against her will; no, she is proud to be sold, proud to see a man give up all he has just to win her. If it is not pride that makes her so eager to be sold on the bride-market, then it is ambition. These girls have dreams just as our girls do, though of a somewhat different type. In Turkey they will be sold to a *rich* man; they will be given a *comfortable* lodging, an excellent *education*. Dreams these are indeed, great dreams that can be realized only outside of their own homeland and only in a Turkish harem, only on the bride-market![6]

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS. The Chechen girls according to their own native *adats* have very little to say about their future husbands. They must wait till their father (or if he is dead, their eldest brother) marries them off to whomever *he* thinks is best,[7] and, primarily, of course, best for the family, for marriage is a family affair. Child-engagements[8] are again a proof that not even the male children enjoy the *right* to choose their mates.

decision of the Ingushi, no marriage was to be considered valid unless the bride

§ 118 of the "*Adats* of the Ingush Province in the 1860's" calls for special attention. It reads: "Since the end of 1862, according to an unanimous decision of the Ingushi, no marriage was to be considered valid unless the bride had freely consented."[9] The *adat* collection then goes on to give the motive for the decision (§ 156): "Till very recently (1862) a woman was regarded as a slave: she enjoyed no human rights. Turning a deaf ear to her plea and protests, disregarding her sobs and tears, her family would sell her off like a ram, throw her on a cart, and deliver her to her husband."[10] Such a miserable bride, the collection tells us, would in most cases run away from her purchaser. But where could she flee except to her own family — unfortunately the same persons who sold her into "slavery"? Her family, however, had to return the fugitive to her lawful husband, for the contract had to be observed to prevent bloodshed. She would then run away again, and even a third time, making life

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[6] Cf. Essad-Bey, *op. cit.*, pp. 202—207. Longworth, *A Year among the Circassians*, I, p. 279.

[7] Cf. The general *adats* for the Black Sea Line, Kuban and Terek Territories, Leontovič, II, p. 251, § 148. *Adats* of 1843 for all Chechens, Leontovič, II, p. 112, § 8. *Adats* of 1864 for the Chechen tribes of Salati, Aukh, and Ichkeria, Leontovič, II, p. 144. Adats of the 1860's for the Ingush Province, Leontovič, II, p. 169. A. P. Berže, Čečnja i Čečency, p. 97.

[8] Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, pp. 427.

[9] Leontovič, II, p. 169, § 118.

[10] "*Adats* of the Natives of the Ingush Province in the 1860's," Leontovič, II, p. 174, § 156.

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saǧîra and the *bâliǧa*. The *bâliǧa* had the right to declare any marriage arrangements made by the *walî* as null and void, i. e., the right of *hîjar* (" retraction "). Still other interpreters were of the opinion that a distinction should rather be made between the rights enjoyed by the girl's father and grandfather and those enjoyed by other guardians — which of course only adds to the confusion.[18] What is of importance is that the Šâfi'itic doctrine prevailed in Daghestan: non-virgins are free to choose their own mates while virgins are not.

But under certain conditions virgins are free as well. In Avaria, for example, if the father of the girl happens to be away on a two-days journey, the girl may go to the mullah (in Avaria called *debîr*) and obtain permission to marry whomever she wishes.[19] But this practic too is not based on customary but on Islamic law.

Mohammed *recommended* (as a *sunna)* that all girls should be asked for their consent before marriage. Among the Avars[20] and the Laks[21] the marriage would be considered invalid if her consent were not asked. In Avaria two persons are sent by the *debîr* as official witnesses to her consent. At first sight all these regulations seem to guarantee freedom of choice, and not a few authors and explorers have made the mistake of not distinguishing between theory and practice.[22] In pre-Soviet times the girl's consent was indeed asked but merely as a formality.[23] As L'vov points out, the girl would infallibly consent, it is true, but not freely. She was afraid of offending her father.[24]

Despite the difference between theory and practice, it cannot be denied that Islamism has brought the Daghestanian woman a number of rights that she had not enjoyed before.[25]

The *adats* of the neighbouring peoples show a striking similarity to those of the Northern Mountaineers. The SOUTH CAUCASIANS (the Khevsurs, Pshavs, and Tushi) had the custom of infant engagement and therefore *de jure* the consent of the engaged persons was not required.[26] Dubrovin tells us that the Tushi and Pshavs generally married off their children with no or very little

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[18] G. Bergsträsser, *Grundzüge des islamischen Rechts*, p. 82.

[19] Kovalevskij, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 175 f.

[20] L'vov, " Domašnjaja i semejnaja žizn etc.," p. 25.

[21] Kovalevskij, *l. c.*

[22] Cf. Alichanov's series of articles " V gorach Dagestana," which are supposed to have appeared in the *Kavkaz*. These articles however are not available on this side of Russia. Baddeley believes that they have never appeared in book form *(The Rugged Flanks of Caucasus*, II, p. 72, *note)*.
C. Hahn, " Putešestvie v Kachetiju i Dagestan," SMOMPK, XXXI (1902), p. 93. This article has been almost verbally translated in Hahn's *Bilder aus dem Kaukasus*.
Byhan, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
Nansen, *Through the Caucasus to the Volga*, p. 104.

[23] Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 204.

[24] " Domašnjaja i semejnaja žizn etc.," p. 22.

[25] We do not refer merely to Shamyl's reforms, which were only superficial.

[26] Eristov, " O Tušino-Pšavo-Chevsurskom Okruge," ZKO, III (1855), p. 109.
Mourier, *Guide au Caucase*, Part I, p. 153.
Hahn, Bilder aus dem Kaukasus, p. 82.
Byhan, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

583 [562] We do not wish to say that bride price in the strict sense of the word does not exist in Daghestan at all. The unfavourable position of the female sex in Botlikh is rightly attributed by Rossikov and Erckert to the fact that she is still considered as purchased property, as chattel.[29] The *iol-puli* of the North Tabassaranians was anything but trivial.[30] In the "Adat Collection of the South Daghestanian Districts" we learn that it varied between Rs. 100 and Rs. 400, a maiden costing more than a widow.[31]

Even in localities where the *kalym* is so insignificant that it is actually only a symbol there are certain, and by no means trivial, expenses which must not be overlooked. First of all, there are not a few betrothal gifts (*infra*, pp. 102 f); then there are the relatively expensive marriage gifts, of which we shall speak below when describing the Lesghian wedding (*infra*, p. 119).

[584] There is, moreover, the so-called *kebin*, a guarantee against divorce. Just because it is the bride who benefits from the *kebin*, it cannot be considered as a bride-price. It is a security for the bride in case of divorce and is usually determined by mutual agreement, depending, of course, on the economic and social position of the contracting families. A widow of the *uzden* class, for example, never received more than a guarantee of Rs. 55.[32] In the province of Kazikumukh (Lak) and Dargwa the *kebin* usually consists of a piece of land having a value of Rs. 50 to Rs. 200.[33] Among the Kapuchians it consisted of money, about Rs. 10 to Rs. 20, while among the Tabassaranians up to Rs. 40. In the Avar Province the *adats* do not fix a definite amount, leaving it entirely to the two families concerned.[34] In North Tabassaran the guarantee was usually between Rs. 15 and Rs. 40 for a maiden and Rs. 5 to Rs. 20 for a widow.[35] The [177] *kebin* (*mahr*, *kebin-khak*, *magar* as we sometimes find it in Russian literature) evidently owes its origin to Mohammedanism.

The SOUTHERN CAUCASIANS. Eristov speaking of the Khevsurian custom of about one hundred years ago informs us that the bride received no dowry but that a price always was insisted upon.[36] Similarly, the Pshav would marry his daughter only if he first received a satisfactory price for her.[37] It is [585] worth noting that the Ingiloi (the Georgians of Sakataly) had to pay a higher kalym for widows than for virgins, Rs. 75 and Rs. 50 respectively.[38] The reason for this regulation seems to be that the widow being older is more liable to be divorced and has less chance of re-marrying than a young girl, and therefore needs a higher *kebin*.

[29] K. N. Rossikov, "Poězdka v Čečnju i Nagorny Dagestan," ZKO. XIII (1884), p. 248. R. Erckert, *Der Kaukasus*, p. 284.
[30] Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 179.
[31] "Adaty Južno-Dagestanskich Obščestv," SSKG, VIII (1875), p. 32.
[32] Svěčin, "Očerk narodonaselenie, nravov i obyčaev Dagestancev," ZKO, II (1853), p. 64. For custom of the Avars see L'vov, "Domašnjaja i semejnaja žizn etc."
[33] Confirmed by Kovalevskij's own field work. See his *Zakon*, II, p. 179.
[34] *ibid.*
[35] "Adaty Južno-Dagestanskich Obščestv," SSKG, VIII (1875), p. 32.
[36] "O Tušino-Pšavo-Chevsurskom Okrugě," ZKO, III (1855), p. 113.
[37] *ibid.*
[38] Hahn, "Putešestvie v Kachetiju i Dagestan," SMOMPK, XXXI (1902), p. 60.

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of raids and robberies. Girls are useless in these tasks, whereas, in this struggle for existence, every additional boy means greater security and prestige.

In conclusion, we may ask ourselves, just why should the *adats* prohibit the manifestation of one's affection for a child. The reason behind this customary law seems to be founded not so much on a father-child relation as on the male-female relation of the Caucasian society. If a father were to show his affection for his child, were he to fondle and carry it, he would be imitating a *woman*, and that would be a terrible degradation! This degradation will be better understood in the following chapter. This rule to my mind is linked up with the low position of the female sex. Just as a man may never do a task that is established by the *adats* as a task exclusively for women, e. g., milk cows, fetch water, gather wood, so a man may never carry, fondle, or rock his child. Cursin seems to be of the same opinion. He says that the Ossetes would call such a man by a very insulting name, "baba," that is, "old lady," if he would ever dare to milk a cow or look after children.[111] We wish to stress two facts: first of all, it is not a lack of affection for one's child that is prohibited, as we have said, but the *manifestation* of that love; and secondly, the manifestation of love is forbidden simply out of fear of being considered an "old lady," a woman!

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[111] G. F. Cursin, *Osetini, etnografičeskij očerk*, p. 39.

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Chapter X

Husband-Wife Relations

562 "Women have been created for men"—these are indeed the words of the Koran (XXX. 20), but as we shall see in the present chapter, the slavish condition of the women throughout the Caucasus is *pre*-Islamic. In fact, Mohammedanism has contributed very much toward the partial emancipation of the female sex in the Caucasus.

§ 1. THE RELATIVE STATUS OF SEXES

There is nothing in North Caucasus that might even approximate our conception of social equality of man and woman.[1] We have already seen what little right she has in choosing a mate (*supra*, pp. 76—81) and how her wishes are taken less into consideration than those of the young man; how a man may have two or more wives (*supra*, pp. 39—50) and how a woman may be only a "secondary" wife. We have seen how a widow is obliged to marry a relative of her deceased husband, whether she herself be in favour of such a match or not, and if she refuses to marry him how she must remain unmarried for the rest of her life (*supra*, pp. 71—75). We have also seen how unequal are the rights and obligations of the male and female partner arising from an engagement (*supra*, pp. 106—110); how the bride was formerly sold, purchased, and inherited like a chattel (*supra*, pp. 82—91). We have seen how in the marriage ceremony she was humiliated by her husband; how she had to pass the virginity test or else be dismissed and formerly even mutilated mercilessly, and then sold off to slavery or even killed by her own father(*supra*, p. 124, Table 16), while the groom may have led the most liberal life before marriage and went unpunished. The unequal divorce rights, too, clearly show her less favourable position (*supra*, pp. 132—137). Infidelity of the wife is punished with divorce, mutilation, and death, while the same and even worse crimes committed by the husband cannot be punished by the wife (*infra*, pp. 168—182). We have also seen how boys are preferred to girls, and if economic conditions lead to infanticide, it is the baby girl that is killed and the boy spared (*supra*, p. 141). Then there are the unequal inheritance rights[2] and the disproportionate division

[1] Cf. Pažidaev, *Gorcy severnago kavkaza*, p. 105.

[2] Since a treatise on inheritance laws belongs more properly to a study on the joint-family and group than on the individual family, the present work does not include any special treatise regarding this question. Suffice it here to say that according to strict North Caucasian *adats*, inheritance is patrilineal and that as a general rule the women possess only their bridal portion.

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of labour[3] which make her appear "a slave and not a wife." In the present section we wish to mention a number of *adats* which clearly show the inferiority of the female sex in Caucasian society.

The NORTHWESTERN CAUCASIANS. The inferiority of the female sex is taken for granted by the women themselves. Cherkess etiquette demands that women, regardless of their social status, rise at once when a man enters the room; and, when passing by on the road, the woman must with downcast eyes humbly step aside for His Majesty, the Man.[4] In a word, the rule of etiquette is "Gentlemen first!" In Abkhazia custom demands that a woman speak to a man only if invited to do so.[5] In recent decades the conditions are supposed to have improved considerably in Kabardia, but even today, she is far from being her husband's equal.[6] Considerable improvement (though not complete emancipation) is also noticeable in Shapsug and Abadzekh villages.[7]

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS. In Chechnia women have been gradually gaining more and more rights, but as in Kabardia, a wife is by no means her husband's equal. An *adat* of the Black Sea Line, Kuban and Terek Territories of about an hundred years ago reads literally: "The wife must consider herself a slave of her husband; she must always obey him; she must be submissive to him as to a master; she must be faithful to him..."[8] Or again, as an *adat* of the Ingush District informs us, "Till very recently (1862), the woman was nothing but a slave: she had no human rights."[9] She may not sit down beside her husband, nor may she take her meals with him. Her duty, we are told, is always that of a servant.[10] Požidaev assures us, however, that she is better off than any woman in other parts of North Caucasus, for when she is obliged to speak to her husband in the presence of strangers, "she may do so in a normal tone and need not whisper."[11]

The Lesghians have a saying according to which "there are two gods: Allah and the husband."[12] A husband has the right to punish his wife for any reasonable cause, though, not in public. A Lesghian once visited his neighbour and to his great surprise noticed two whips hanging on the wall. He was, naturally, curious and inquired about this luxury of possessing *two* whips. "Why *two?*" he asked. "I *need* two," answered the neighbour quite nonchallantly, "one to calm my horse and the other to calm the old lady."[13]

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[3] We shall devote an entire section (§ 2) to the division of labour (*infra*, pp. 156—159).

[4] Longworth, *A Year among the Circassians*, I, pp. 282 f. There is no religious equality among the Circassians either: women are excluded from certain religious festivals. Cf. L. Ja. Ljul'e, "Věrovanija, religioznye obrjady i predrazsudki u Čerkes," ZKO, V (1862), p. 131.

[5] Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, ii, p. 43.

[6] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 192.

[7] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 193.

[8] Leontovič, II, p. 254, § 168.

[9] Leontovič, II, p. 174, § 156. See also Berže, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

[10] Berže, *l. c.*

[11] *Gorcy severnago Kavkaza*, pp. 106 f. This "privilege" is also found in Khevsuria (*ibid.*).

[12] Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 194. See also N. Samurskij, *Dagestan* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925), p. 46.

[13] Kovalevskij, *l. c.*

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"The Lesghian husband is, at times, very cruel to his wife," says Omarov, a Lak by birth, who describes in his excellent article (written 1870) what his own mother had to suffer, how husbands mercilessly beat up their helpless wives, and brothers their sisters.[14]

L'vov, describing the conditions prevailing about 75 years ago, writes of the Avars: "She is considered a mere slave. She is placed on the same level as a domestic beast, in spite of the fact that Islamic law gives her not a few rights. Even the possessions she brings along on her wedding day are hers only theoretically; practically, it is her husband who owns them. She is unable to dispose of her own property, whereas her husband may do with it whatever he wishes. All this is considered a sin neither in the eyes of God nor of man. If his wife proposes to bring the case up before the authorities, her husband will act at once: he either flatters her and so wins her over by 'love', and she out of gratitude concedes her rights to him, or, if she does not, he threatens to divorce her and to keep the *kebin* and thus to dismiss her without any security for the future."[15]

Another clear proof of the inferiority of Caucasian women is the insignificant participation allowed her in religious matters and law processes.[16] Many of these customs are, doubtless, of Islamic origin; many, however, are not, and the spirit behind such regulations is certainly pre-Islamic.[17]

Often women cannot be witnesses, unless there is at least one male witness present. In this case one male witness plus two female witnesses makes two legal witnesses. That may be poor arithmetic; but that is the actual practice, for example, in Dargwa.[18] Sometimes they cannot be witnesses at all.[19]

Sometimes women are not allowed to take an oath, for example in the District of Hyuraki,[20] or, at most, they may swear on the Koran as is the case in Sirgua.[21] In Hyuraki, the husband takes the oath instead, or, if the woman is not married, her nearest male relative takes it for her.[22] Never has she the right to take the *khatun-tallkh*, an oath, with an obligatory divorce as sanction (*supra*, pp. 134 f).[23]

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[14] "Kak živut Laki," SSKG, III (1870), pp. 4 f.

[15] "Domašnjaja i semejnaja žizn Dagestanskich gorcev Avarskago plemeni," SSKG, III (1870), pp. 31 f. Alichanov claimed that the women of Avaria were very independent (Cf. Hahn, "Putešestvie v Kachetiju i Dagestan (lětom 1898 goda)," SMOMPK, XXXI [1902], p. 93.) However there is no reason to suppose that their condition is more favourable than that of the women in other parts of Daghestan (Cf. Baddeley, *op. cit.*, II, p. 72).

[16] Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, I, p. 141.

[17] Although some of the customs have been influenced by Roman-Byzantine law (e. g., in Chechnia, Khevsuria, Svanetia, and Ossetia, as Kovalevskij believes, *l. c.*), it cannot be denied that laws regulating the position of women in religious and inter-tribal (or legal) matters are mostly purely-Caucasian adats.

[18] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," SSKG, VII (1873), pp. 71, 83 f.

[19] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," p. 99.

[20] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," p. 83.

[21] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," p. 70.

[22] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," pp. 83, 70, 99.

[23] The *khatun-tallkh* is in itself another form of inequality. A wife may be divorced simply because her husband has sworn falsely. She, however, may never take such an oath.

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Women are generally excluded from being conjurors. One of the most common forms of evidence in the *adat* courts is conjury, an oath taken by an established number of relatives of the defendant or plaintiff. Any hesitation, refusal of one of the conjurors to swear, or failure to find the required number of conjurors are considered undeniable evidence. The oath is taken by each of the conjurors either on the Koran, or sometimes toe *khatun-tallkh* must be sworn. The practice of conjury is found among all Caucasian mountain tribes: Cherkess, Chechens, Lesghians, Georgians, neighbouring Tartars, Kumyks, etc.[24] The number of conjurors required depends on the gravity of the crime, the penalty connected with it, and on the social position of the contending parties and conjurors. The following is an example of a catalogue of conjurors established for theft in Mikakhi District.

For stealing sheep:

one sheep	3 conjurors
two sheep	4 conjurors
three sheep	5 conjurors
four sheep	6 conjurors
more than four	6 conjurors

For stealing cows:

one cow	5 conjurors
two cows	10 conjurors
three cows	12 conjurors
more than three	12 conjurors

For stealing young domestic animals:

one colt less than three years old	6 conjurors
one one-year-old calf	3 conjurors
one two-year-old heifer	5 conjurors
one two-year-old ox	5 conjurors
one three-year-old ox	6 conjurors

This catalogue has been taken from the "Adat collection for the Districts of Dargwa Province."[25] For murder and crimes considered as serious as murder[26] the number of conjurors may be as high as 40. Generally only relatives may be conjurors. This requirement is evidently a reflection of the strong solidarity of the Caucasian sib: to swear falsely would bring ruin to the swearer, and should a large number of conjurors be required, the entire sib, living and dead, may be doomed.

The proof by conjury is recognized by Islamic law, but its existence in the Caucasus need not be attributed to Mohammedanism. (1) Even in Arabia, it pre-existed Islamism. In fact Mohammed merely borrowed and incorporated the *kazama* into his system.[27] (2) Moreover, it is a widespread institution among

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[24] See the various *adat* collections. See also Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, especially pp. 443 f; *Code of King Vakhtang VI*, Karst edition, pp. 60, 179.

[25] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," SSKG, VII (1873), p. 53.

[26] *Supra*, Chapters XII and XIII.

[27] Goldziher, "Muhammedanisches Recht in Theorie und Wirklichkeit," *Zeitsch. f. vergl. Rechtsw.*, VIII (1889), No. 3, p. 412.

peoples having a patriarchal organization, regardless of religion. We find it among the ancient Indo-European Slavs, Germans, and Ossetes.[28] (3) We also find it among non-Mohammedans of Caucasus.

After this lengthy degression we can offer a few examples to illustrate the relation of conjury to the unequal status of women. In Mugn District (Dargwa Province) women are not allowed to be conjurors. If less than 12 conjurors are required by any *adat*, not only must all conjurors be *male* relatives, but relatives of the *father*.[29] In Hyuraki District[30] and elsewhere[31] female relatives may participate in the conjury only if they are necessary to complete the required number of 40.[32]

The inferior position of the female sex is further expressed in the *adats* determining the amount of bloodwite. Sometimes, it is true, no distinction is made whether a man or a woman is the victim,[33] but sometimes a definite distinction *is* made. The Kurins, for instance, have an established bloodwite of Rs. 250 for the death of a man and only Rs. 125 for the death of a woman.[34] The Ossetine bloodwite for the murder of a man is twice as high as that for a woman.[35]

§ 2. DIVISION OF LABOUR

The NORTHWESTERN CAUCASIANS. It is no longer true that all the work must be done by the female members of the family.[36] The men do the ploughing, woodchopping, hunting, and in general all the heavy work; the women do the usual housework, cook, wash, sew and mend clothes, and work in the garden.[37] Formerly, of course, the situation was quite different. The reports of the 18th and 19th century picture the Cherkess and the Abkhaz

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[28] Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, p. 460.

[29] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," p. 60. For *adats* of the Tsudakhar District, see "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," pp. 111 f.

[30] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," p. 84.

[31] "Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," p. 71.

[32] If there are still not enough conjurors, the oath must be repeated till the required number of oaths is reached. ("Adaty Darginskich Obščestv," p. 84.)

[33] "Adaty Južno-Dagestanskich Obščestv," SSKG, VIII (1875), p. 47. When we use the words "crime" and "murder" we understand them in the sense of the *adats*. To be more exact we should rather say "damage" and "homicide." Customary law is not interested in *guilt*. It aims to repair damages done to the family and sib, whether that damage be intentional or accidental. If a horse accidentally kicks and kills a passer-by, both the rider and the owner of the horse become blood-enemies of the victim's sib (Leontovič, II, pp. 45 ff). Since customary law is not interested in guilt, it is not interested in *punishing*. It aims to *repair* the damages, hence it matters little whether the "criminal" himself or another member of his family or sib is "punished."

[34] "Adaty Južno-Dagestanskich Obščestv," p. 7.

[35] Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, p. 340.
The position of the female sex in Khevsuria is somewhat better than elsewhere in the mountains (Požidaev, 106 f). She may even take her meals with her husband (Požidaev, *Gorcy severnogo Kavkaza*, p. 107). The Kumyks allow their wives more rights than are granted to women by the *adats* of the true Caucasians (Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, ii, p. 639).

[36] Ladyženskij, FT, pp. 199 f.

[37] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 201.

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menfolk as gentlemen of leisure, the women bearing the burden of the family work practically by themselves.[38]

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS. Practically all the work in the house and in the field is done by the women, while the men usually just stand idly by. The tasks done by the men are generally only seasonal, such as hay-cutting, woodchopping, and ploughing. The women, on the other hand, must slave day after day, doing very strenuous work. And even when they have finished their work out in the field and their other chores, they are kept busy sewing and mending clothes, etc. In a word, life in Chechnia and Ingushetia is that of busy bees and lazy drones.[39] Of course, today there is a marked improvement in the position of the female sex. Even if we allow for the frequent exaggeration of pre-Soviet explorers and *adat* collectors, we cannot deny that the Ingush women were obliged to bear a terribly disproportionate share of the family work. In "The Collection of *Adats* for the Ingush Province of the 1860's" we read: "Only very recently the natives of the Ingush Province, according to an ancient custom, considered the woman a work-animal, a 'thing,' not a being possessing human personality."[40] Vertepov in his monograph on the Ingushi attributes the disproportion in the Ingush sex ratio to the disproportionate division of work. His supposition is confirmed by the fact that the Ingushi of the plains have a much more equal division of labour and at the same time the sex ratio is much more normal.

TABLE 17

Ingush Sex Ratio (Vertepov, "Inguši," **Terskij Sbornik**, II [1892], No. 2, p. 99)

Location	Male	Female	Sex Ratio
Mountains	53.5%	46.5%	115 : 100
Lowlands	51.2%	48.8%	104.9 : 100

The mountaineers of Daghestan belong to the same class of "idlers" as the other North Caucasians.[41] The Avar women must carry loads of wood and hay sometimes from great distances, while the men only idle their time away. Women carry as much as 120 pounds (three *puds*) at a time.[42] L'vov has painted the lot

[38] Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, ii, p. 42.

[39] Baddeley, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 60, 93; Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, p. 437; R. Erckert, *Der Kaukasus*, p. 137; Engelhardt und Parrot, *Reise in die Krym und den Kaukasus*, I, p. 242; Klaproth, "Voyage au Mont Caucase," *Nouvelle Bibliotheque*, XI, p. 175.

[40] Leontovič, II, p. 169, § 115: "Eščе ves'ma nedavno tuzemcy, naseljajuščie Ingulevskij okrug, po obyčaju dobrago starago vremeni smotreli na ženščin, kak na rabočij skot, sčitali ženščinu veščˈju, ne podozrevaja v nej nikakoj čelovečeskoj ličnosti."

[41] Cf. Omarov, "Kak živut Laki," SSKG, IV (1871), pp. 1—24, where find long detailed account of harvest and work out in field.

[42] Abercromby, *A Trip through the Eastern Caucasus*," p. 101.

562 of the women of Avaria as a very miserable one indeed. A woman, he tells us, is regarded as nothing more than a "work-animal." The men prefer this sort of "domestic beast" because she can stand much more than a horse or an ox; the only difference between her and a domestic animal is that she eats bread while an animal is satisfied with hay.[43] An ideal wife in the eyes of the Avars is one that is robust and, above all, very diligent.[44] L'vov goes on to call the husband a "heartless tyrant." He may get himself a second wife and regard the first as his slave, and woe to this poor miserable slave-wife if she does not bear a child before the newcomer! Endless jeers and ridicule are all that she can expect! [606] By moving into the house of her husband, she becomes a servant of her mother-in-law, who does only the easy jobs, leaving the disagreeable and difficult tasks to her daughter-in-law.[45] The Dido,[46] Botlikh,[47] Kaitago-Tabassaranians[48] and the other Lesghians do not differ from the Avars.[49] In Daghestan, "it is derogatory for a man to carry anything less dignified than a gun."[50] While the husband stands about and gossips at the local mosque or putters with his gun, the 462 wife must slave from morn till night. The husband, of course, does the sowing, makes the hay, threshes, sheers the sheep, builds houses;[51] but these jobs are not sufficient to keep him busy all year round. The wife does most of the harvesting, and, as Svěčin puts it, "brings half of the grain on her shoulders, leaving the other half for the donkey."[52] She has to cut the grass for the animals, care for the horses, cook, weave, milk the cows, mind the children, do the usual housework, set the cakes of cow-dung out to dry, clean the wool, spin, and fetch water.[53] Even the small girls of the family must take part in all these tasks. Frequently one can see nine- to ten-year-old girls carrying unbelievably heavy jugs of water, while boys as old as they, if not older, sit around and amuse themselves.[54]

The SOUTHERN CAUCASIANS. Among the Khevsurs[55] and the Svans[56] it is again the female sex that must bear practically the whole burden of family work.

The traveller will frequently witness the typically Caucasian scene "of women working and men loafing" also in OSSETIA.[57] The men do the plough-

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[43] L'vov, "Domašnjaja i semejnaja žizn Dagestanskich gorcev Avarskago plemeni," SSKG, III (1870), p. 11, *note*.
[44] L'vov, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[45] L'vov, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[46] Merzbacher, *Aus den Hochregionen des Kaukasus*, II, p. 455.
[47] Erckert, *op. cit.*, p. 284; K. N. Rosnikov, "Poězdka v Čečnju i Nagornyj Dagestan," ZKO, XIII (1884), pp. 247.
[48] Amirov, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
[49] Amirov, "Sredi gorcev severnago Dagestana," SSKG, VII (1873), p. 48, claims that the Lak community of Batsa-Khari is an exception to this general rule.
[50] Abercromby, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
[51] Nansen, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
[52] Svěčin, "Očerk narodonaselenija, nravov i obyčaev Dagestancev," ZKO, II (1853), p. 63.
[53] Svěčin, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
[54] Svěčin, *l. c.*
[55] Eristov, "O Tušino-Pšavo-Chevsurskom Okrugě," ZKO, III (1855), p. 113.
[56] Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, ii, p. 109.
[57] Baddeley, *op. cit.*, I, p. 69.

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ing transporting and selling the produce, build houses, and do the heavy work; however, this is far from being a full-time employment. The women, on the contrary, are busy all day long: they must milk the cows, fetch water from the well and wood from the forest, and, of course, look after the children. If a man were ever to do any of these jobs, he would become the laughing-stock of the village.[58]

§ 3. SPECIAL RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF WOMEN

Despite all that we have said about the disadvantageous and even slavish condition of the woman in North Caucasia and neighbouring territory, the women enjoy certain rights and privileges which must not be overlooked. For example, throughout the Caucasus she alone is the *mistress* of the house.[59]

The NORTHWESTERN CAUCASIAN (as well as the Chechen), according to an *adat* of the Black Sea Line, Kuban and Terek Territories (§ 174), will permit no one to say anything unfavourable about his wife. The husband will tolerate an insult against his own father or mother, or even against himself, sooner than hear a single abusive word said against his wife.[60] When a daughter is married off into another sib the family does not lose all interest in her; on the contrary, it is this very interest that is her surest protection against ill-treatment. As we shall see in the following chapter, the husband who unjustly takes the life of his wife is infallibly avenged by her relatives. Moreover, the woman enjoys considerable freedom owing to the fact that her husband is frequently absent, either hunting or on a raid.[61] And even in the sixteenth century, as we read in G. B. Ramusio's *Raccolta di viaggi* (1583), the wife had a firm will of her own, which her husband usually respected. In a way, women are considered sacred: blood-vengeance will never take place before a woman,[62] and hence, she is an asylum like the sacred hearth-chain (*supra*, p. 127). The wife, or to be more exact, the mother of the household, is the sole mistress of the house and as such may arrange things within her little kingdom as she pleases and may even give orders to others.[63] In Abkhazia formerly a woman of a privileged class even had the right to preside at certain religious ceremonies, direct civil affairs, and be the leader in a raid.[64]

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIAN does not lose interest in his daughter after her marriage, and therefore he too compels her husband to

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[58] Čursin, *Osetini, etnografičeskij očerk*, p 39; Merzbacher, *op. cit.*, I, p. 204; see Hahn, "Po dolinach Čoroka, Urucha i Ardona," SMOMPK, XXV (1898), p. 32.

[59] Ladyženskij, "Zur Erforschung der Rechtsgewohnheiten der Bergvölker des Kaukasus," *Zeitsch. f. Ethnologie*, LXII (1930), p. 231.

[60] Leontovič, II, p. 254, § 175.

[61] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 201.

[62] Mourier, *Guide au Caucase*, I, p. 136.

[63] Castagné, "Le Droit coutumier familial des montagnards du Caucase," Révue des études islamiques, 1929, No. 2, p. 272.

[64] K. Mačavriani, "Někotoryja čerty iz žizni Abchazcev. Položenie ženščiny v Abchazii," SMOMPK, IV (1884), No. 2, p. 41; P. I. Kovalevskij, *Kavkaz, Narody Kavkaza*, pp. 34 f.

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562 [606] respect her rights. Chechen women enjoy considerably more freedom than do the women in Daghestan.[65] But even the Lesghian women are not entirely without rights. We have seen how in matters regarding engagement and marriage the mother plays an important part. This may be a vestige of an ancient mother-right culture.

The SOUTHERN CAUCASIANS. Despite the slavish condition to which the South Caucasian *adats* condemn the female sex, the women are given certain unusual privileges, enjoyed not even by the menfolk. In Khevsuria[66] and Svanetia,[67] just as in W. Circassia[68] and OSSETIA,[69] a woman is able to put an end to a savage duel by a mere word or by her very presence. The Svan need but touch her and he is, at least temporarily, secure even in the presence of his bitterest enemy.[70]

Finally, we should not forget that the women are the official owners of their engagement and wedding gifts, and if divorced, also of the *kebin*.[71]

§ 4. PROBLEMS

562 628 [171] The two main problems of this chapter are: (1) Why must the women do most of the work? (2) Why is the status of women throughout the Caucasus so unfavourable? These questions can be answered only in the light of our entire study and in the light of the entire culture of the North Caucasians. Her unfavourable and still privileged position as mistress of the house and as an asylum for any murderer resembles very closely the condition of the women in a society such as that found among pastoral nomads of Asia. It is indeed difficult to determine just in how far the pastoral nomads of Asia are responsible for the status of women in North Caucasus and in how far the general economic conditions among the mountaineers have contributed to the position of the female sex. Here we wish to point out one important contributing factor, raids and blood-feuds. By no means do we maintain that this is the *most* important or the *only* factor; it is, however, *a very important* one. Any mountaineer may object to the accusation that he is an idler by saying: "We men are constantly exposing our lives for our wives and children, while the women are able to work in peace and security. How can we be soldiers and farmers at the same time?" Amirov heard the same argument used in Kaitago-Tabassaran, where formerly there was hardly a man in all Kaitago that had not killed or cooperated in killing another man. As a consequence of feuds, the men had to be constantly on the lookout, constantly hiding, and frequently

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[65] B. Plaetschke, *Die Tschetschenen*, p. 33.
[66] Estad-Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
[67] Dirr, FT, p. 43.
[68] Mourier, *Guide au Caucase*, I, p. 136.
[69] N. F. Takoeva, "Kosta Chetagurov — narodnyj poet osetin etnograf-kavkazoved," SE, 1949, No. 2, p. 129.
[70] Dirr, *l. c.*
[71] Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, I, p. 143.

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away from home.[72] It is indeed striking that, with the disappearance of blood-feuds, the men have begun to take a more and more active part in the family work.[73]

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[72] Amirov, "Srodi gorcev severnago Dagestana," SSKG, VII (1873), p. 48.
In regard to the Chechens, see Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, pp. 437 f.

[73] For more material on the position of the female sex in the Caucasian society see the following: Olearius, *Ueber den Zustand Russlands zur Zeit des Alexei Michailowitsch*; J. de Lucca. *Rélations des Tartares, Percopites et Nogaies, des Circassiens, etc.*; Ramusio, *Raccolta di Viaggi*.
Hahn, "Putešestvie v Kachetiju i Dagestan," SMOMPK, XXXI (1902), No. 2, pp. 49—96.
Alichanov, Series of articles in the *Kavkaz*, "V gorach Dagestana."
Leontovič, "Otnošenie muža k žene," *Adaty Kavkazskich Gorcev*, II, pp. 98 ff.
Mačavarian, "Někotoryja čerty iz žizni abchazcev. Položenie ženščiny v Abchazii," SMOMPK, IV (1884), No. 2, pp. 40—76.
Zacharov, "Domašnij i socialnyj byt ženščiny u Zakavkazskich Tatar," SMOMPK, XX (1894), pp. 91—151.
Steinberg, "Pravovyje položenije ženščiny v Dagestane," *Novij Vostok*, 1929, No. 26—27.

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trace of this epoch. He goes on to say that the *kalym* was originally a form of bloodwite demanded for bride-stealing, which later evolved into a means of compensating the family of the bride for the loss of a worker. Although Ladyženskij's interpretations are generally good, we connot agree with him in this particular point. It has never been proven that bride-stealing was the original form of marriage anywhere in the world. Moreover, it seems to be much more probable that bride-stealing resulted from the practice of bride purchase rather than vice versa. That *kalym* evolved from bloodwite is very improbable, especially in the Caucasus, because reconciliation by means of bloodwite seems to be a relatively recent substitution for actual blood vengeance.

(2) The various husband-wife avoidances, such as not mentioning the name of one's husband or wife, not using the second person, avoiding all conversation in public, etc. may be an expression of the superior position of the male sex in Caucasian society (cf. *supra*, pp. 152—159).[40]

(3) The parent and parent-in-law avoidance, the obligatory avoidance of older male relatives of the husband, the prohibition of inquiring about the health of the wife's or husband's relatives, and similar practices are difficult to explain.

Parent-in-law avoidances are certainly among the most universal practices known to man. In fact, this form of avoidance is so universal that Lowie does not hesitate to write, " From the extremely wide range of parent-in-law avoidance, the absolute universality of these rules might be conjectured on the ground that, where unrecorded, the customs have merely eluded notice."[41] In Australia, for example, " it was formerly death for a man to speak to his mother-in-law."[42] In New Britain if a man were speaking accidently with his mother-in-law, the horror of the " crime " would most likely lead to suicide.[43]

The interpretation of parent-in-law taboos has baffled all ethnologists, and a satisfactory answer still has not been given. The parent-in-law avoidance has been connected with exogamy and bride-capture ;[44] it has been considered a vestige of matriarchy, an expression of awe for the mistress of the household ;[45] it has also been considered as a means to prevent improper intercourse. We may have here a case of convergence, based more on human psychology than on any particular institution ; nor is there any reason to attribute the same cause for the practice in all parts of the world. This is but another important ethnological problem that waits to be solved.

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[40] The Caucasians seem to be of the opinion that separation is the best means of fostering conjugal love (cf. Leontovič, II, pp. 254 f, § 176).

[41] *Primitive Society*, p. 88.

[42] Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South East Australia*, p. 267.

[43] H. H. Romilly, " The Islands of the New Britain Group," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, n. s. IX, p. 9.

[44] Cf. A. H. Post, " Ueber die Sitte, nach welcher Verlobte und Ehegatten ihre gegenseitigen Verwandten meiden," *Globus*, LXVII (1895), pp. 176 f.

[45] Cf. R. Briffault, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 266 f.

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IV. CONCLUSION

Chapter XIV

Conclusion

§ 1. MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY OF THE CAUCASIANS IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY

1. Russian (Soviet and Pre-Soviet) Influence

That the Russian military, political, and cultural influence has greatly affected, changed and unified, the marriage and family customs of the various peoples of the Caucasus cannot be denied. We need but recall some of the many facts we have pointed out in our comparative study.

(1) The Russians, we have seen, severely prosecute *polygyny* (*supra*, p. 39) and not without success. The relative scarcity of polygamous unions throughout North Caucasus and the neighbourhood, regardless of how ethnically different the tribes may be, must be attributed, at least in part, to Russian legislation.

(2) In recent times both mates have begun to enjoy greater *freedom of choice*, (*supra*, p. 76), thanks to the Russian insistance on freedom in mating as a *conditio sine qua non* for a legally valid marriage.

(3) We have also observed how rapidly *bride purchase* was disappearing or assuming an entirely different significance throughout the Caucasus, again, at least in part, owing to Russian legislation, industrialization, and education (*supra*, pp. 83, 87, 90).

(4) *Bride price, bloodwite*, etc. were formerly measured in cows, horses, sheep, and oxen, but now they are measured in money : not in live stock but in Russian rubles ! (*Supra*, pp. 82—89, 95, 168—179).

(5) The Russian opposition to *bride capture* has helped to make the practice become rare (*supra*, pp. 97 f). It was Russian positive law gaining ascendency over the *patria potestas* and its insistance on freedom of choice that encouraged and even defended elopement (*supra*, p. 98).

(6) The general disappearance of slavery and the associated sociological consequences, e. g., *the marriage impediments*,

(7) the *less severe penalties for sex crimes* which are gradually being adopted by all tribes of Caucasia (*supra*, pp. 175, 180).

(8) and the improvement in the *status of the female sex*, all must be reckoned among the effects of Russian and Soviet influence.

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essential parallels—characteristic of the Turco-Mongolian family are: the almost complete absence of mother-right and totemistic practices, the emphasis placed on the joint-family and the male members, special rights for the first-born son, importance of the male head of the family and the *patria potestas*, the disadvantageous position of the female sex, blood-feuds, exogamy, the *kalym*, which is usually paid in live-stock, the dread of incest, the severe penalties for sexual offenses, fireplace ceremony at weddings, the high esteem for the bride's virginity, the unusual craving for male children, the importance of the bridal procession, etc.

There is also a religious connection between the North Caucasians, the Indo-Europeans, and the Turco-Mongols, a connection that confirms our claim of the existence of a social connection between the three groups. It is not only the *similarity* of the religions of the three groups that we must keep in mind but also the intimate connection, the *organic* connection, between the nomadic social and religious forms. The solidarity which exists among the members of a sib, the great longing for male children, blood-feuds, the levirate, the *patria potestas*, the wedding custom of walking around the fireplace, and many other practices are fundamentally connected with ancestor worship and cult for the dead. Ancestor worship is one of the essential features of the religion of the Indo-Europeans, the Turco-Mongols, and the North Caucasians. Moreover, among all three groups ancestor worship is linked up with the worship of the fireplace. Another very essential part of the pastoral nomadic religion was the custom of sacrificing horses. W. Koppers has shown the great similarity between the horse-sacrifices of the Indo-European and Altai peoples;[48] R. Bleichsteiner proved beyond question the existence of the practice throughout the highlands of Caucasia.[49] Horse-sacrifices among the Indo-Europeans and the North Caucasians are certainly of Inner Asiatic origin.

Thus we see that even though the North Caucasians are not pastoral nomadic in the economic sense—the economy of the steppes is impossible in the mountains, especially in the unfertile valleys of the Caucasus—they are pastoral nomadic in their social organization. *A connection between the North Caucasian society and that of Inner Asia is beyond question.*

3. Vestiges of More Ancient Cultures In the Marriage and Family Customary Laws of the North Caucasians

As is only natural, the deeper we delve into the history of the marriage and family *adats* the more obscure the history becomes.

First of all there are the so-called mother-right vestiges which we must consider. It is interesting to note that the intensity of these vestiges among the three different groups of Caucasians (Northwestern, Northeastern, and Southern)

[48] W. Koppers, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 f, 18—22. See also W. Koppers, "Pferdeopfer und Pferdekult der Indogermanen," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV (1936), pp. 280—411.

[49] "Rossweihe und Pferderennen im Totenkult der kaukasischen Völker," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV (1936), pp. 412—495.

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seems to be inversely proportional to the intensity of pastoral traits in the given group: the Southern Caucasians possess by far more vestiges of a mother-right culture than the Northerners; and again, the Northeasterners possess more of these vestiges than the Northwesterners.

It is of course difficult to determine just what one may call a mother-right trait and what not. Some of the practices we shall now review briefly are therefore only doubtfully vestiges of such a culture; others must be considered as good indications of such a culture; finally, others, I think, can be called genuine vestiges.

(1) *Before delivery a Cherkess woman goes to her own mother's house to give birth to her child;* her husband may not visit her during this time.[50]

(2) Our chapter on marital, parental, and kinship avoidances contains a number of possible vestiges, especially *the temporary return of the bride to her family after the wedding* and the temporary *visit-marriage.*[51]

(3) Then there is the *important part played by the mother in the wedding customs* of the mountaineers,[52] which we termed "suspiciously matriarchal." The Lesghian mother (not father!) welcomes the bride into the house, as if she were the head of the family. It is the mother who holds the bride's hand as she crosses the threshold. It is the maternal uncle who has led the bride's horse in the Ingiloian bridal procession from the bride's home to that of the groom. It is the mother who puts the honey into the mouth of the bride as a sign that she has a sweet life ahead of her under such an amiable mistress. And it was the mother who, by presenting the engagement gifts, concluded the betrothal contract.

(4) If a *murderer kills a pregnant woman he is obliged to pay an additional* fine of Rs. 30 to the victim's (not husband's) sib; the Rs. 30 are perhaps for the loss of the unborn child, who formerly belonged to the mother's sib.[53]

(5) The *mother of the girl recieves a horse as part of the Ossetine*[54] *and Temirgoian*[55] *bride price.*

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[50] Bleichsteiner ("Kaukasische Völker," *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, VI, p. 259 f) accepts this custom as a true vestige; Ladyženskij (FT, p. 188) rejects it. In our opinion the practice may be rightly looked upon as a *possible*, though not absolutely certain, vestige. In his translation of Ladyženskij's article Dirr adds a note, disagreeing with the author: "Ganz so einfach liegt wohl die Sache nicht. Die Mutter konnte ja auch zu ihrer Tochter kommen." In other words, Dirr objects that if the only reason for the return of the expectant mother to her family were merely to receive the necessary assistance at childbirth, as Ladyženskij believes to be the case, then why does not the mother come to her daughter's home instead? Ladyženskij takes up the question again and defends his position in a subsequent article ("Zur Erforschung der Rechtsgewohnheiten der Bergvölker des Kaukasus," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, XLII [1930], pp. 238 f). He argues that it is simply impossible for the mother to go to her daughter's home: in the first place, she must stay at home, being the mistress of the household; in the second place, it is strictly prohibited by custom for her to live at the home of her son-in-law at any time whatsoever. This answer to Dirr's objection is certainly insufficient: if the daughter actually returned to her family merely because she needs help at childbirth, it would seem rather strange that she could not get this necessary assistance at her own home from her mother-in-law or her sisters-in-law.

[51] *Supra*, pp. 165 ff.

[52] *Supra*, pp. 124, 128.

[53] *Supra*, p. 139.

[54] *Supra*, p. 87. The horse is called *madi-bash*.

[55] Vasil'kov, "Očerk byta temirgoevcev," SMOMPK, XXIX (1901), p. 91.